A Bush Foreign Policy

Style, Priorities Said to Differ From Reagan's

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The foreign policy of a George Bush administration would continue along the main lines of existing Reagan administration policy but with significant differences in style and priorities and some shifts in substance, according to Bush aides and others familiar with the Republican presidential nominee's thinking.

If elected, Bush would come to the Oval Office with more extensive experience in foreign affairs—and more enthusiasm for the subject—than any chief executive since Richard M. Nixon, who also served an eight-year apprenticeship as a globe-trotting vice president.

Bush, like Nixon, has been nearly everywhere—he's visited 72 countries in every continent and corner of the globe—and has met the leaders of nearly all important foreign governments. Unlike Nixon, though, Bush has shown little inclination to be a geopolitical strategist. Bush is described by those who have watched him in action at close range as pragmatic, issue-oriented, less ideological than Ronald Reagan and with no overall diplomatic design. The aides and associates who were interviewed for this report said they know of no foreign policy plan that has yet been drawn up for a Bush administration.

"In general philosophy I'd call him a Rockefeller Republican in foreign policy: tough, hardheaded, sort of power-politics oriented—but with a relatively low ideological content compared to the present administration," said retired lieutenant general Brent Scowcroft, who was White House national security adviser when Bush was director of central intelligence in 1976 and who has continued to discuss foreign policy with Bush ever since.

As described by aides and friends, Bush has been eager to engage Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in direct negotiations and international maneuver ever since meeting him in Moscow in March 1985 at the funeral of Gorbachev's predecessor. At the same time, Bush has expressed more caution about Soviet policy than has recently been heard from Reagan.

"Remember, the Cold War is not over," Bush declared in San Francisco July 29. "We must be bold enough to seize the opportunity of change, but at the same time prepared for, as one pundit titled his column, 'The Protracted Conflict.' " Four days later in Chicago, Bush called for tangible Soviet shifts across a broad front—in conventional and chemical arms reduction, the defusing of regional disputes, easing of restrictions on human rights and emigration, and easing Kremlin policy toward Eastern Europe—as "measures of meaningful change" to prove that Gorbachev's reforms have real importance for the United States.

This is one of a number of articles on the two presidential nominees and their positions on major issues. Tomorrow's article will deal with the foreign policy views of Michael S. Dukakis.

Bush believes the changes in Moscow so far have been "significant, remarkable, but we don't know where they are going to lead," said Dennis Ross, a former Pentagon and National Security Council official who is foreign policy coordinator of the Bush campaign. If elected, "he's going to probe" Gorbachev to answer the key questions, according to Ross.

A central issue for Bush, which he has addressed in unusually explicit terms in his public statements, is the relationship of military power to political and diplomatic achievement. Like Reagan, he is an exponent of "peace through strength," but if elected Bush will face changed circumstances.

Unlike Reagan's early years, a Bush administration would be likely to face powerful pressures to restrain and even cut the defense budget. However, Bush has called for keeping defense spending at current levels and has made a campaign issue of his refusal to abandon expensive strategic missile systems before negotiated arms control accords with the Soviets.

Nevertheless, several of his advisers believe Bush is likely to go slow in the final stages of negotiating a strategic arms reduction treaty, something Reagan recently said might be finished by next fall. So a military spending crunch—and its implications at the U.S.-Soviet bargaining table—would likely be a major problem for a Bush administration.

There is no sign that Bush shares either of the two special Reagan "dreams" that motivated and to some extent complicated U.S. arms control policy in the recent past: Reagan's ambitious goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons or all ballistic missiles, and his ambitious aim of creating a "global shield" strategic defense to make nuclear weapons obsolete.

"Right now, he's more skeptical than the Reagan people" about big cuts in strategic nuclear arms, said Scowcroft. Bush, after expressing caution early in the year, has recently promised to deploy a strate-

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gic defense "as soon as it's practical." But according to Scowcroft, Bush is "clearly aware" that strategic defense cannot continue to take an increasingly large share of a tight defense budget. "There is just absolutely no doubt that SDI [the Strategic Defense Initiative] cannot continue along the lines that Ronald Reagan wanted it to and [former defense secretary Caspar W.] Cap Weinberger wanted it to. It's impossible," Scowcroft said.

Bush has put special emphasis on trying to negotiate cuts in East-West conventional armies in Europe, on stopping the spread of ballistic missiles in the Third World and on achieving a worldwide ban on chemical weapons. He has taken a special interest in chemical weapons issues since twice breaking a tie in the Senate in 1983 to permit resumption of U.S. chemical weapons production and volunteering in early 1984 to present a U.S. draft treaty banning chemical weapons to the 40-nation Geneva disarmament conference.

As vice president, Bush considered himself the "confidential adviser" to the president and had lunch alone with him once a week for most of the past eight years. Bush has seldom revealed any of his conversations with Reagan even to other members of Reagan's inner circle.

Former White House aide Michael K. Deaver said Reagan saw Bush as "a man who understood how the government worked, especially in foreign policy," and used him as a confidential sounding board in moving toward decisions on major issues. Administration insiders sought to recruit Bush to plead their case with Reagan on many occasions but Bush, while seeming to be sympathetic to all comers, rarely had any discernible impact and has never said if he did anything about their entreaties.

The relatively rare cases in which Bush's internal positions are known suggest a willingness on his part to use U.S. military power abroad—but with caution.

In October 1983, in Reagan's absence, Bush chaired the two crucial White House meetings at which the U.S. invasion of Grenada was planned. Several participants later said Bush's clear and forceful chairmanship contributed to the decision to order U.S. troops into action. Robert C. McFarlane, who at the time was White House national security adviser, said Bush told him privately before the second meeting that "I believe we should go ahead with this operation."

In February 1984, also in Reagan's absence, Bush chaired a crucial meeting that led to the decision to withdraw the U.S. Marines from Beirut. Three months earlier, 241 Americans had been killed in a terrorist truck-bomb attack on the Marine compound.

According to two participants, Bush made it clear during the meeting that he favored the pullout, despite the strong opposition of Secretary of State George P. Shultz (who was also out of town) and a final plea from Shultz's representative at the session, then-Undersecretary of State Lawrence S. Eagleburger.

There are various interpretations of Bush's motivations. One participant said Bush seemed impressed with congressional opposition to the Marine presence at the start of a presidential election year, a concern shared by then-White House chief of staff (and now Bush campaign manager) James A. Baker III. Another participant quoted Bush as having said "I don't see how you're going to bring any order" to Lebanon by keeping the Marines in place.

Still another official who discussed the issue with Bush at the time said the vice president had been deeply affected by seeing the bodies of dead Marines being dug from the rubble during his show-the-flag trip to the site immediately after the terrorist disaster, and that he believed "a military contingent should have a clearly defined mission," which he felt was lacking in Lebanon.

The loss of U.S. credibility among Arab leaders following the pullout from Lebanon was forcefully impressed on Bush during subsequent travels in the Persian Gulf. This is said to be among the reasons for his enthusiastic support of the proposal in 1987 that the United States agree to reflag and protect Kuwaiti shipping against Iranian attacks.

On the two occasions when U.S. naval forces were threatened or attacked with Iranian mines during Persian Gulf patrolling in 1987 and this year, according to an administration official, Bush made clear his preference for U.S. retaliatory action—but at "the low end of the spectrum of targets" to minimize loss of life and political repercussions. On one occasion, a U.S. helicopter attacked and disabled an Iranian vessel that had been spotted laying mines. On the other occasion, U.S. teams blew up two Iranian oil platforms in the gulf, after warning all inhabitants to flee.

As a former CIA director, Bush seems to have no aversion to covert operations overseas, although he is reported by several sources to be firmly convinced that the government's secret intelligence chief should not become a policy advocate, as was the case with the late William J. Casey in the first six years of the Reagan presidency.

In early 1985, immediately preceding and during a vice presidential trip to Sudan, Bush played a key role in setting up secret U.S. military flights that rescued 482 Ethiopian Jewish refugees, or Falashas, and flew them to Israel. The operation has rarely been officially acknowledged because some of the Sudanese leaders who cooperated were later ousted and imprisoned for their efforts. However, Bush referred to it in an appearance Sept. 7 before B'nai B'rith, the Jewish fraternal organization, and the Bush campaign has boasted of his Falasha rescue role in campaign appeals to American Jews.

Bush's state of knowledge and his views regarding the adminstration's secret arms sales to Iran and its secret contra resupply activities in Central America have been the subject of much controversy and speculation since the Iran-contra affair broke nearly two years ago.

On the basis of the records and testimony dug out by congressional and other probers, there seems little doubt that Bush was informed

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repeatedly about the U.S. arms sales to Iran as they developed. He said later that he had "reservations" about the policy, specifically about a U.S. overreliance on Israel in the early arms deals, but no forceful objections on his part have come to light. Bush has refused to disclose what he told Reagan in private.

In the case of the contra resupply efforts, no evidence has emerged directly involving Bush in discussion of the Iran arms fund diversion or of contra supply activities barred by Congress at the time. A variety of records, however, show repeated contacts between prime movers of the resupply effort and vice presidential staff members Donald Gregg and his deputy, Col. Samuel Watson. The two aides have said they were not involved in the resupply operation and did not know of illegalities or wrongdoing.

Forging a workable U.S. policy in Nicaragua is likely to be among the first, and among the most difficult, problems Bush would face as president if he is elected next month, in view of the partisan deadlock that brought the Reagan policy to a dead end. He has said little about the subject in his campaign, and a Central America position statement issued by the campaign spoke in vague terms of promoting peace "but not peace at any price."

An internal campaign document prepared last month for Bush partisans said Bush will work with the Central American democracies, most of which officially oppose the contra effort, but that "military support for contras is necessary."

Another formidable issue is the Arab-Israeli peace process, which has deadlocked in recent months amid high tensions on all sides. Bush has spoken forcefully during the campaign of his dedication to U.S.-Israeli strategic cooperation and of what he would not do—such as deal with the Palestine Liberation Organization or back an independent Palestinian state. But he has said little about what he would do in the interest of Middle East peace.

Former NSC adviser McFarlane said Bush kept close to, and supported, the development of the September 1982 "Reagan plan" for the Middle East, which foundered because of reservations by both Israelis and Arabs. The internal Bush campaign document issued last month said a key principle in Bush Mideast negotiations would be "land for peace" in the West Bank, a long-established concept that is now opposed by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and his party.

Trade and international economic issues, especially relations with Japan, are likely to present tough challenges, possibly of crisis proportions, in the next four years. Bush, like Reagan, opposes protectionist measures and has said he will "aggressively negotiate" reductions in tariffs and other trade barriers, building on the precedent of the U.S.-Canada free trade agreement.

According to Gregg, Bush would like to move in the direction of a U.S.-Japan trade accord, something the Reagan administration studied but did not advocate. Other aides said Bush sees a larger role for Japan in aiding fledgling democracies and helping to ease the burdens of Third World debtor nations.

Bush's pragmatic tendencies and lack of a master plan in foreign affairs suggest that the capabilities and cohesion of his senior foreign policy aides would be of crucial importance in a Bush administration. Moreover, Bush is said by close associates to be a "people person" who absorbs information and works his way to decisions primarily through face-to-face discussions rather than through written papers.

It is widely assumed in the Bush camp that campaign manager—and former White House chief of staff and Treasury secretary—James Baker would become secretary of state in a Bush administration. Given Baker's long and close relationship with Bush, his prestige within the Bush camp and his prior governmental experience, it seems likely that he would wield extraordinary clout if he goes to Foggy Bottom.